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OF HEROIC MEN:

A MILITARY ADVENTURE.

By J.S.C. Abbott.

Harper's
Dec. 1864.



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HEROIC DEEDS OF HEROIC MEN.

BY JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.



AMBROSE E. BURNSIDE.

I.—A MILITARY ADVENTURE.

Putting to Sea.—Entering the Inlet.—Conquest of Roanoke Island.—The Slaves.—Destruction of the Rebel Fleet.—Extending the Conquest.—Expedition to the Neuse.—Decisive Battle.—Anecdotes.—Capture of Newbern.—Secret Expedition.—Bivouac.—Battle of Kingston.—Daily Marchings.—Battle at Whitehall.—Heroism of Butler.—Successful Raid.—Battle of Goldsborough.—Success of the Expedition.—The Return.

ON the 11th of January, 1862, a vast fleet of gun-boats and transports was assembled at Hampton Roads, Old Point Comfort, for a secret expedition. Spectators on the shore counted one hundred and twenty-five boats of all sizes and patterns. There were formidable vessels of war, powerfully armed and nobly manned. There were ferry-boats extemporized into gun-boats, and peaceful merchantmen frowning with

artillery. There was one queer stern-wheeled craft, which went puffing about among the fleet, attracting much attention. It had come from the shoal waters of the Kennebec River. The sailors called it "the wheel-barrow." Its draught was so light that they insisted it could run wherever there was a heavy dew. Sixteen thousand men—infantry, artillery, and cavalry—were embarked in this fleet, under the chieftainship of General Burnside. The troops were divided into three brigades, under Generals Foster, Reno, and Parke; all experienced officers of the regular army. Commodore Goldsborough, a veteran of fifty years' service, commanded the fleet.

It was a bright, mild winter's day. Just after the sun had gone down and the stars had come out, those on the shore observed an unusual commotion in the fleet. Lights were flashing and tug-

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LOUIS M. GOLDSBOROUGH.

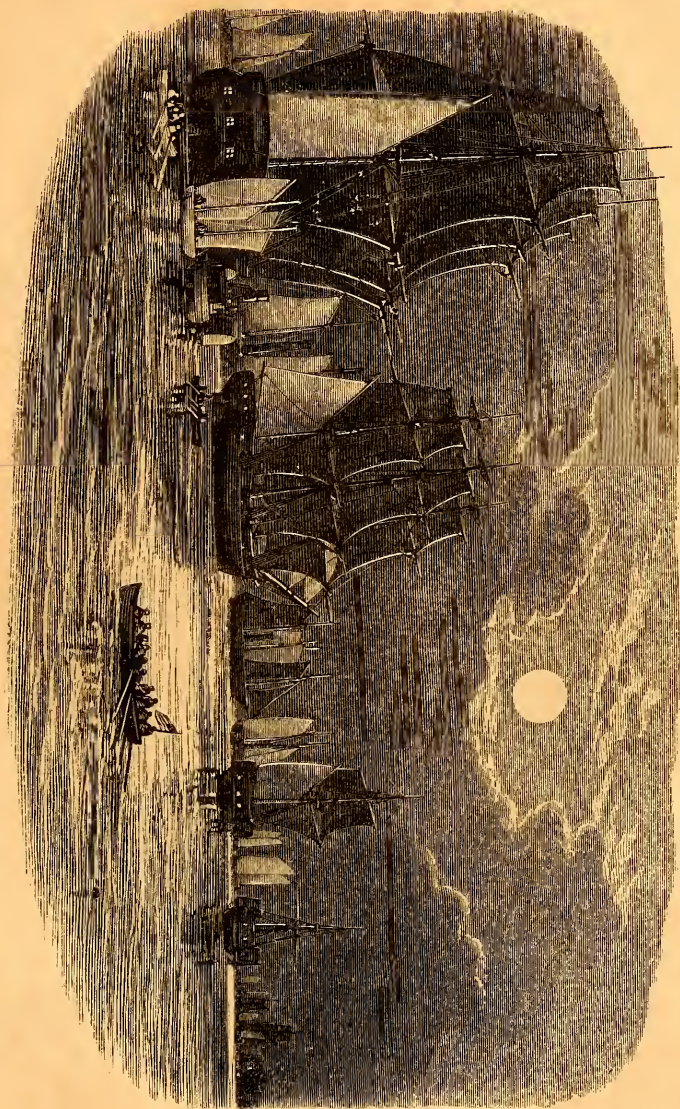
boats moving rapidly in all directions, and it was evident that every ship was getting up its steam. Just at midnight some signal rockets pierced the sky from the flag-ship, and almost instantly every paddle-wheel was in motion, and the majestic squadron swept down the bay. It was a brilliant night, serene, cloudless; with the moon near the full. It was very manifest to all on board that hard work was to be done by both fleet and army; but when, where, how, none but a few of the highest officers could tell, and they were silent. At noon the next day, Sunday, January 12, the fleet was entirely out of sight of land, enveloped in fog, steaming rapidly down the southern coast.

At length the fog lifted, and the leading ships caught sight of the shores of Hatteras, and, followed by the whole squadron, turned toward the Inlet. It was a gorgeous afternoon of autumnal beauty. The scene was magnificent. Thou-

sands of men were clustered on the decks and in the rigging of the ships, gazing with admiration upon the golden sunset, and the forest-crowned shore fringed with its long line of snow-white beach, upon which the billows of the wide Atlantic dashed almost mast-head high, and with thunder roar.

It was too late to enter the Inlet. The next morning was cold and wintry. Clouds were gathering; the ocean looked black; and angry billows with foaming crests pursued each other. It was difficult to cross the bar in a storm, as smooth water was very necessary for the passage. Yet it was not safe for a fleet to attempt to ride out a Hatteras gale on that open sea. About seventy of the ships succeeded in safely getting within the Inlet. One of the transports, laden with horses, struck the bar, plunging her keel into the sand, and remained immovable. The waves dashed over the ship, hurling the horses

PUTTING TO SEA.



into the sea, where they all perished. The seamen lashed themselves to the rigging, and there, without food or sleep, and drenched to the skin, remained for forty-eight hours until the storm abated. Every endeavor which was made to send them assistance was fruitless. Two heroic men, Colonel Allen and Dr. Wellar, perished in the attempt. During the continuance of the gale nearly every vessel was injured, both those within and those without the Inlet. Many were badly shattered, and four entirely wrecked; the crews generally escaping.

A calm succeeded this fearful storm; yet it was two weeks before the fleet, crippled and dis-

persed, was collected and refitted at a safe anchorage in Pamlico Sound.

A comparatively small strait separates the two majestic Sounds called Pamlico and Albemarle. In the centre of this strait you find Roanoke Island, twelve miles long and three broad. As the channel on either side is narrow and tortuous, the island effectually commands the passage between the two Sounds. Here the rebels were in force with batteries, intrenchments, and gunboats. Wednesday morning, the 6th of February, dawned cold, and wet, and gloomy. Groping through the fog our fleet approached the island, and, anchoring for the night, prepared for



STORM AT HATTERAS INLET.

a conflict in the morning. The morning came. As the clouds broke, and the rays of the sun struggling through the rifts gave promise of a brilliant day, Nelson's famous order was run to the mast-head of the flag-ship, "America expects every man to do his duty!"

The gun-boats immediately commenced throwing 9-inch shot and shell into the woods near the beach. Under protection of this fire a large number of troops were landed. The intrenchments were bombarded, the batteries were stormed, and the patriot troops swept the island from south to north in uninterrupted victory. Before five o'clock in the afternoon of the 8th Roa-

noke Island was rescued from the hands of traitors, and the star-spangled banner floated over all its captured ramparts. General Foster led the men in their impetuous attacks upon the redoubts, and inspired them with his own enthusiasm and intrepidity. The gallant Colonel Russell, of the Connecticut Tenth—a man who knew not the sense of fear—was struck by a bullet which pierced his heart, and he fell dead without a groan. As the men were assailing one of the most formidable redoubts their ammunition failed them. Just then Major Kimball of the Hawkins's Zouaves came up, and offered to charge the redoubt. "You are the very man," said



ROANOKE ISLAND, NEWBERN, AND THE SOUNDS.

General Foster, "and this is the very moment. Zouaves, storm the battery!" There was an instantaneous rush, and with their ringing battle-cry, *Zou, Zou, Zou!* they ran across the intervening space, clambered the ramparts, and burst through the embrasures. The rebels fled in the utmost panic, not even stopping to spike their guns or to carry off their wounded.

General John G. Foster, with his brigade, followed in the track of the Zouaves and pursued the retreating rebels at the double quick. For nearly six miles the exciting chase was continued. General Reno took another path to cut off the rebel retreat, and on the way came across

a body of eight hundred of the foe who were compelled to throw down their arms. The rebels were now thoroughly vanquished. A flag of truce was sent to General Foster, asking what terms of capitulation he would accept. "Unconditional surrender," was the reply. It was impossible to dispute the terms, and before five o'clock in the afternoon the Stars and Stripes were floating over every battery on the island. Six forts, two thousand five hundred prisoners, forty-two heavy guns, with a large quantity of smaller arms and ammunition, fell into the hands of the victors. The patriots lost but forty killed and two hundred wounded. Among the pris-



JOHN G. FOSTER.

oners taken there were about two hundred slaves, all men in the prime of life, whom the rebels had brought upon the island to work upon the intrenchments. As the white prisoners were paroled, these slaves were called together and informed that they might remain upon the island as freemen, or return with their masters to the main land. Nearly every man chose to return with his master. This extraordinary decision led some one to exclaim in bewilderment, "What does this mean? We thought you all wanted to be free." An honest, earnest black man stepped forward, and, taking off his hat, said,

"We'se wives and chillern in slavery. We can't leave them. Bress de Lord, de day ob jubilee is come. We'se all to be free now. We must go back and get our wives and chillern."

No comment can add to the pathos of this incident.

The next day was the Sabbath. The rebel gun-boats had escaped up the Sound to Elizabeth City. The patriot gun-boats pursued them; with full head of steam they rushed by the fort, under whose guns the rebel boats had

sought protection, and in a conflict of fifteen minutes destroyed the whole rebel fleet, killing or capturing nearly every man of the crew. From all the region around the slaves flocked by hundreds to the national boats, entreating to be taken "to de Norf." This was impossible. Their grief was touching as they saw their hopes blighted, and that the long-prayed-for hour of deliverance had not yet come.

After a few unimportant excursions in this vicinity, every where indignantly striking down the flag of treason, General Burnside reassembled his fleet at Hatteras Inlet for a more important movement than he had yet attempted.

On the night of the 12th of March the fleet was again in motion. They steamed down Pamlico Sound about fifty miles, and entering the spacious River Neuse, anchored upon its western bank within about sixteen miles of the city of Newbern. This city, of about five thousand inhabitants, one of the finest in the State, is situated at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent. It is important as a military post, being connected with Goldsborough and Raleigh on the west, and Beaufort on the south. The rebels had strongly fortified it, employing thou-

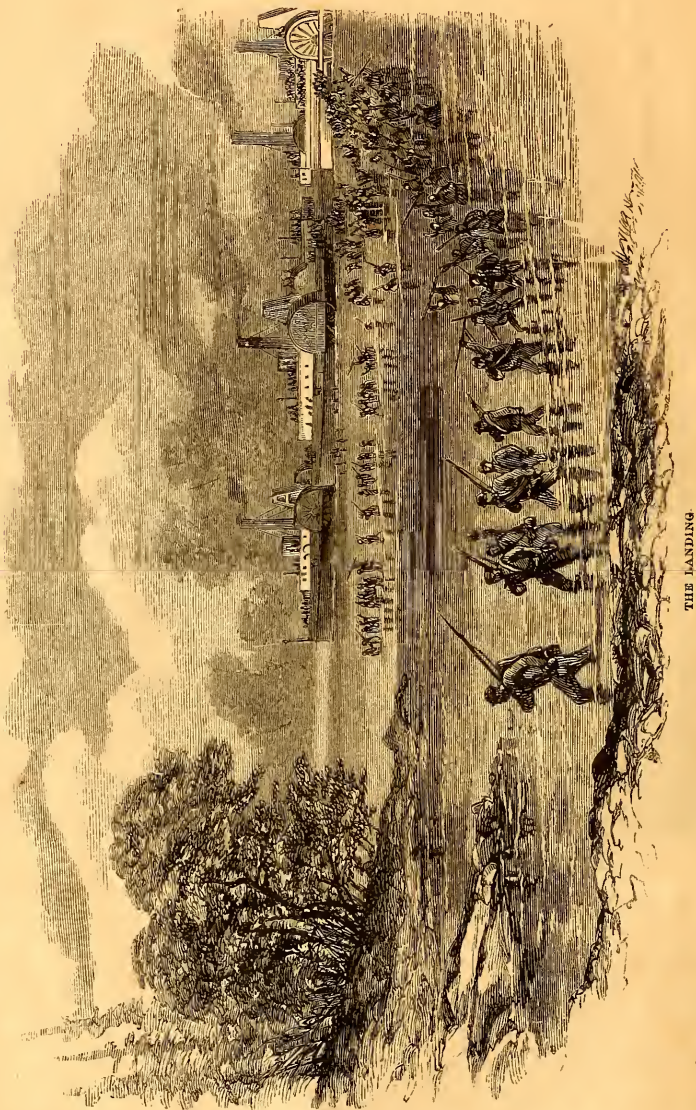
UNION GUN-BOATS DESTROYING REBEL FLEET.



sands of slaves in throwing up intrenchments. A line of water-batteries, with heavy guns, from every commanding point swept the river. Six miles from the city there was a long line of earth-works extending from the river to the swamps and tangled woods, effectually barring approach to any ordinary force or courage. From that point to the city the whole expanse was filled with redoubts, batteries, rifle-pits, treacherous torpedoes, and all the other appliances of honorable and dishonorable war.

Early in the morning of March 13 the patriot troops, five thousand in number, landed at Slocum's Creek, about a dozen miles below New-

bern. The water was shallow. The overladen boats sank deep and could not approach near the shore. The landing seemed much like a frolic. With jokes and shouts and peals of laughter the men leaped overboard, up to the middle in water, and waded to the shore. Their path up toward Newbern led over an extended plain, marshy from recent rains, and covered with a dense growth of gloomy pines, draped with hoary Spanish moss. The heavy gun-carriages sank deep in the mire, and a cold March wind swept over the drenched and shivering ranks, subduing the mirth of the most buoyant.



THE LANDING

The Massachusetts Twenty-fourth led the march. The Connecticut Eleventh brought up the rear. The line of march in compact mass filled the forest road for two and a half miles. The gun-boats followed cautiously along the channel of the stream, throwing shells into the woods in advance of the head of our column. Night came dismal with clouds, darkness, mud, and rain. The wearied soldiers threw themselves upon the sodden leaves of the flooded plain for their cheerless bivouac. On Friday morning, the 14th of March, the patriot troops were again early in motion, and soon approached the long line of earth-works running from the river to the swamp, strongly protected by rifle-

pits and batteries on either flank. The woods in front of the intrenchments had been felled for a distance of a quarter of a mile, that the assailants might be exposed to an unerring fire. Behind these intrenchments the rebels were comparatively safe. Neither bullet nor ball could easily harm them. It would seem madness to an ordinary observer to send men with bare bosoms to face the line of fire bursting from those breast-works. But our heroic troops accomplished the apparent impossibility. Forming in line of battle in the edge of the woods, a mile in extent, they opened a vigorous fire of musketry and artillery which they must have been conscious could accomplish little, save to

CAPTURE OF FORT TROMPSON, NEAR NEWBURN.



distract attention by making a noise. Nearly every ball and bullet went plump and harmless into the breast-work of earth rising six feet high before them.

At length when the field of battle was covered with smoke, and the frenzy of conflict inflamed all minds, Colonel Clark, at the head of the Massachusetts Twenty-first, rushed across the open plain, through the deadly storm of lead, and entering on the full run one of the embrasures seized the gun. The rebels fled, astonished at such audacity. Instantly two rebel regiments came charging upon them, and the heroic little band were compelled to retire.

But the next moment Colonel Rodman, with the Fourth Rhode Island, charged upon a battery of five guns. At the double quick they ran upon these death-dealing muzzles, pouring in a volley of bullets as they ran. The desperate adventure was a success. They seized the guns, and with the precision of veterans in compact mass, with bristling bayonets, bore down along the rebel line within the intrenchments. The Eighth and Eleventh Connecticut, and Fifth Rhode Island rushed instantly to their support. The rebels fled precipitately, and the Stars and Stripes were proudly unfurled over one portion of their ramparts.

Animated by this sight the patriot troops, who were struggling through the tangled morass at the southern extremity of the enemy's line, made a grand charge upon that flank. Aided as they were by their comrades, who were already within the ramparts, they speedily smote down all opposition, and the rebels tumultuously fled. With exultation and rapture, which none can comprehend but those who have passed through such scenes, the patriot troops clambered the ramparts, discharging their muskets at the retiring foe, disappearing in the distance, and greeting the glorious old banner of the Union with enthusiastic huzzas. It was a splendid victory. Every regiment behaved heroically. The Fifty-first New York attracted especial applause. There is not a man of that regiment who will not look back with pride upon the battle of Newbern so long as he shall live. The rebel army was disorganized and panic-stricken. It was important that they should have no time to recover from their consternation.

There are many interesting incidents of this battle worthy of record. Lieutenant Fearing, of General Burnside's staff, was sitting upon his horse when a 32-pound shot passed under the horse's belly between his legs. The Lieutenant, apparently unconscious of his own danger, fondly patted his horse in commendation of the animal's quiet bravery.

When the first battery was captured Colonel Clark, of the Twenty-first Massachusetts, had mounted one of the rebel guns, and was waving his colors, when two rebel regiments advanced upon him and his handful of men. The patriots leaped the parapet and fled. Captain J. D. Frazer, who had been wounded in his right arm, carrying his sword in his left hand, tumbled and fell into the ditch. He was seized and dragged back by the rebels over the parapet. A guard of three men was placed over him. A few moments after, when the Fourth Rhode Island made a charge, he drew a concealed revolver and captured all three of his guards.

One of the noblest young men of our nation—a hero, a patriot, and a Christian, Adjutant Frazer A. Stearns, son of President Stearns, of Amherst (Massachusetts) College—fell in this battle. Young Stearns had already borne himself bravely at Roanoke Island. Here, in the thickest of the fight, a bullet pierced his breast, and he dropped dead.

General Burnside, aware of the value of time, scarcely remained upon the battle-field long enough to bury the dead. The whole army was immediately put in motion for Newbern, which was about six miles distant. The gun-boats continued to follow along the river, capturing the water-batteries with scarcely a shadow of opposition. Early in the afternoon the troops reached the eastern bank of the Trent opposite the city. The magnificent bridge, seven hundred and fifty yards in length, constructed both for railroad and carriages, across which the reb-

els had retreated, was in flames. A number of turpentine factories also were rolling up their billows of fire and smoke, which enfolded the city in a black canopy sublimely gloomy. Several transports had followed the gun-boats up the stream, and in a few hours our whole army of five thousand men were ferried across the Trent, and were in undisputed possession of Newbern. The fires were extinguished, a strong provost-guard established, every liquor cask in the city staved, and by midnight quietude and peace reigned throughout the conquered city.

The fruits of this victory were six forts, thirty-four heavy guns, six steamboats, and public property to the amount of two millions of dollars. The rebel troops at the battle-ground were almost entirely protected by their ramparts, and our bullets did them little harm; and, on the other hand, they did not dare to expose themselves by taking aim, but loading under cover raised their guns over their heads and fired almost at random, thus throwing many of their bullets away.

As the rebels were retreating the slaves along the route, who had been taught to believe their masters omnipotent, could hardly credit their senses, and were quite unable to repress their joy and exultation. As one of the slave-holding rebels, breathless with terror, spurred his horse by his own door, not venturing to stop, an aged slave stood by the side of his cabin gazing in unutterable astonishment upon the flight and fright of his master. Just as he disappeared in the woods a shell from one of the gun-boats, with its unearthly scream, careering high above the tree-tops, followed the path of the fugitive. The gray-headed old man, clapping his hands, rushed into his cabin shouting,

"Wife, wife, massa is running, and the wrath of God is after him!"

The next day was the Sabbath. By order of General Burnside all the churches were thrown open, the army chaplains officiated, and thanks were returned to God for the signal victory he had granted the patriot arms.

Several months passed away, during which the Union troops fortified themselves at Newbern, and extended their conquest to several important places in the vicinity. On Tuesday, the 9th of December, 1862, a division of the little army received orders to put three days' rations in their haversacks, and prepare for an immediate march; but *where* they were not informed; neither was it supposed to be any of their business to inquire. Blind, unquestioning obedience is the law of the army. The rising of the sun on Thursday, the 11th, found these troops vigorously on the move from Newbern directly west, toward Goldsborough, along what is called the Trent Road—a road running a few miles west of the River Trent, and almost parallel with it. The force consisted of four brigades, composed of nineteen regiments. The line of march was formed by two hundred cavalry in advance; then followed the several regiments of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, while

THE ENCAMPMENT.



the rear was composed of one hundred and fifty baggage wagons. The entire line, in easy marching order, extended about five miles, filling the whole road.

It was a splendid wintry morning, mild and serene. As the vast array was beheld from an eminence moving along the winding road, with the fluttering of innumerable banners, and the gleam of burnished arms, the sight inspired the most phlegmatic with enthusiasm. The army numbered in all thirteen hundred infantry, eleven hundred cavalry, with fifty-one pieces of artillery. The troops that day marched eighteen miles over a heavy, sandy road, with occa-

sional sloughs to wade, and, as night approached, they prepared for their encampment in a large plain of about three hundred acres, which they found opened in the forest.

As the twilight faded away hundreds of campfires, brilliant with the blaze of the resinous pine, lighted up the scene with wondrous beauty. The soldiers drank their hot coffee from their tin cups, ate their frugal supper of hard bread, and the camp resounded with jokes and laughter as most of them threw themselves down for a shelterless bivouac, with the sand for a mattress, and a knapsack for a pillow. Wearied with the long day's march the reign of

silence soon commenced. Many of the officers were provided with rubber blankets, which they spread upon the ground. Over that a woollen blanket was spread. And then, three cuddling together, with their feet to the fire, and with their united three blankets and three over-coats spread over them, enjoyed more luxurious slumber than is usually found in ceiled chambers and on beds of down.

At five o'clock the next morning, Friday, the 12th, the drum-beat—the reveille—roused all from their slumbers. It was a bitter cold winter's morning—so cold that the water in the canteens of the soldiers was found frozen. The icy ground seemed solid as a rock. The fires, from piles of pitch-pine, were immediately brightly blazing, the ever-welcome coffee was boiling, and after their breakfast of hard bread the soldiers were again upon the move. Marching rapidly along a level country covered with pine forests, and where few dwellings were found, at noon they reached a road turning nearly at right angles to the north. This road led directly to Kingston, one of the most important towns in North Carolina, situated on the northern bank of the Neuse, about forty miles above Newbern. The soldiers by this time had supposed that Kingston was their destination. But much to their surprise, they found that they were not guided upon that road, but leaving it on the right, pressed directly forward in a westerly course. The soldiers subsequently ascertained, that which the officers already knew, that half-way between this crossing and the town of Kingston there was a stream called Southwest Creek, where the rebels, in anticipation of an attack, had erected formidable intrenchments.

General Foster, one of our most bold and efficient officers, sagaciously sent forward a small force of cavalry to deceive the rebels by the feint of an attack upon their elaborate works at the creek. At the same time the main body pressed vigorously forward on the road toward Goldsborough, and with the setting sun sought their second night's bivouac, having effected a march of nearly twenty miles. The wearied soldiers, after a hurried meal, again threw themselves on the frozen ground and slept soundly. Scarcely had the morning dawned ere the beat of the drum aroused the slumbering host. They replenished their waning fires, in haste prepared their breakfast of fragrant coffee with hard bread, and at six o'clock the tramp of armed men and the rumbling of carriage-wheels again resounded through the solitudes of the forest. All day long they continued their march, until about the middle of the afternoon, when, having passed several miles beyond Kingston, they came to another cross-road, which at a very sharp angle led back, in a northeasterly direction, toward that city.

The head of the long column turned sharply round and entered this road. By it they could cross the Southwest Creek at a point farther up the stream by a bridge which was feebly defend-

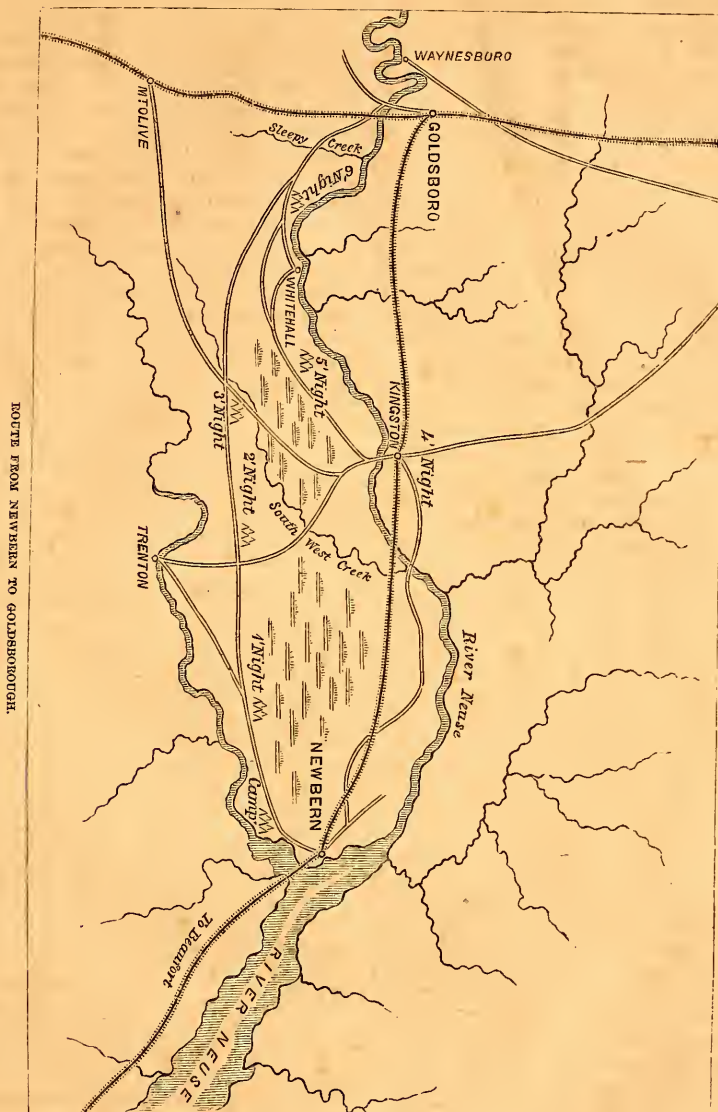
ed. The rebels, however, fearing this movement, and yet not daring to vacate their intrenchments on the main road, had sent forward a small force and burned the bridge. They had also placed two 12-pounders on an eminence on the north side of the creek, to prevent the reconstruction of the bridge or the floating of pontoons. Here the Union troops were brought to a stand. While the advance of the column waited for the artillery and the wagons to come up, pioneers were sent forward, under strong protection of artillery and musketry, to attempt to rebuild the bridge.

The creek was here but a few rods wide, with somewhat precipitous and densely-wooded shores. The road from that point to Kingston, a distance of about fourteen miles, ran all the way through an almost unbroken forest. A few pieces of Union artillery were sent ahead, to engage the attention of the rebel battery, while the Ninth New Jersey regiment secretly forded the stream above and below, and rushed upon the hostile cannon from either flank so impetuously and unexpectedly that guns, horses, and men were all taken, almost before there was any consciousness of danger.

It was Saturday night—the third day of the expedition. Again the troops bivouacked in the open air, but all night long working parties of engineers and pioneers were busy rebuilding the bridge. Before the dawn of Sunday it was completed, and at five o'clock the troops were again upon the march. As before, a body of cavalry led the advance along the narrow road, with pine forests on either side. They frequently encountered the pickets of the enemy, and in slight skirmishes easily dispersed them. The cavalry was followed by a strong body of artillery, who shelled the woods wherever there was any suspicion that the foe might be lurking.

It will be remembered that the line of the army, filling the whole capacity of the road, occupied an extent of about five miles. At nine o'clock in the morning those in the rear of this long column heard the roar of artillery among the advance, shot answering shot. It announced that the enemy had been found, and it sent an electric thrill through the eager host. Every man pressed forward. The whole army soon found themselves in a clearing of the woods of about twenty acres, on the right-hand side of the road. There was here opportunity for the army to deploy and make ready for action. The enemy were so effectually concealed in the woods that not a man could be seen; and their batteries, commandingly posted under the protection of an apparently impassable swamp, were constantly pitching their shells over the tree-tops into the midst of our advancing troops. Six Parrot guns were brought forward by the patriots and placed in position to return the fire. It was a blind battle of invisible foes; but the two hostile parties had discovered each other's position, and bloody scenes were at hand.

The Ninety-second and Ninety-sixth New York regiments filed into the woods on the left



of the road, to charge the rebel batteries on their right flank. The Ninth New York plunged into the woods on the right of the road, to advance upon the batteries under shelter of the thicket between the road and the swamp. The Forty-fifth Massachusetts rushed boldly into the swamp itself, and toiling onward through a tangled network of roots and stumps, and up to their knees in mire, sought to traverse it, that they might attack the batteries on their left flank. The swamp was densely covered with huge old trees, whose gnarled roots were twisted in all possible contortions beneath the ooze and slime of the bog. But a few moments elapsed before the whole forest was alive with the rattle of mus-

ketry, for the heads of each of these divisions had met the foe. Our troops, keeping up a constant fire, steadily advanced, driving the rebels before them—who were fighting, Indian-fashion, behind stumps and trees.

At length the Forty-fifth Massachusetts, who had penetrated the swamp, forced their way through it, and ascended a little knoll beyond covered with shrub oaks. But they had hardly formed in line before a shower of bullets came rattling in among them, a rebel battery having got their precise range. The Tenth Connecticut and One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania came up at the same moment, having followed through the swamp. The rebel guns opened

upon their left flank, raking their position. The fire of these guns was so concentrated and powerful that it cut a perfect path, two rods wide, for some distance through the forest. No flesh and blood could stand such a storm. The Union troops threw themselves on their faces and hugged the ground as their only protection. They could not move in any direction without the utmost peril.

While in this terrible situation they heard the well-known cheer of their comrades announcing triumph on the left. The Ninety-sixth and Ninety-second New York had come up, flanked and successfully charged the rebel battery. At that shout the Tenth Connecticut, Forty-fifth Massachusetts, and One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania sprang to their feet, and rushed to join their comrades in the charge. The rebels waited not for the impetuous onslaught, but abandoning every thing, fled pell-mell for the bridge which crossed the Neuse, opposite Kingston, which was not far distant. The retreat of five hundred and fifty of the foe was cut off, and they were taken prisoners. The Union artillery came rushing up along the road, shelling the fugitives in their flight. The rebels, in their consternation, had no chance to destroy the bridge, and the patriot troops, following closely upon their heels, crossed the river and took possession of Kingston. The brunt of this battle—and it was truly a heroic fight—was met by the Forty-fifth Massachusetts, Tenth Connecticut, and One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania, essentially aided by the Ninety-sixth and Ninety-second New York. Five Union regiments drove six thousand rebels from their intrenchments.

The rebel prisoners stated that they considered their position quite impregnable, for they had not supposed it possible for any advance to be made through the swamp. They had consequently massed their forces to block up the passage of the road. The first intimation they had of the position of the regiments who had dashed through the swamp was from the storm of bullets which swept their ranks. There was an old church near the range of the hostile batteries which was thoroughly riddled with shot. As our troops occupied the ground vacated by their foes they found sixteen dead bodies in the church. The prisoners confessed that they carried off as many dead bodies as they could, and had thrown them into the river to conceal their loss.

Most of the prisoners were South Carolinians. They were ferocious in their hate, declaring that they would fight forever. They said they had received orders from General Evans that morning to give no quarter. They had not entertained the idea that they could be beaten. Many of them were as ignorant as savages, having not the slightest conception of the cause of the war. They had been told that the Northern people had invaded the South from the brutal desire to rob them of their property and to cut their throats. "What for you uns," said they, in

their barbaric dialect, "come down here to fight we uns? We uns don't want to fight you uns." One might as well attempt to explain one of the problems of Laplace to a New Zealand savage as to give one of these ignorant, debased, South Carolinian mean whites an idea of the questions involved in this civil war.

The North Carolinians generally appeared much less morally and intellectually degraded. Almost to a man they expressed regret at the existence of the war, and said they had no heart in it. They asserted that their State had been carried out of the Union by the vote of the Legislature against the vote and sentiment of the people. They were mostly conscripts, and were quite willing to be taken prisoners. They complained bitterly of the harsh treatment they had received from their own officers, and said their only food had consisted of Indian corn and bacon. Unshorn, uncombed, and unwashed, they presented an appearance of filth and savagery which scarcely any group of Digger Indians ever equaled. Many of them were very bitter against Jeff Davis, and told terrible tales of the despotism which reigned in secessiondom.

Our troops found that the rigor of rebel conscription had stripped the country of every man capable of bearing arms. Many of the prisoners said that they had been dragged away from their families without any process of law, and without an hour's delay. The general aspect of the region through which the army passed testified to the truth of these statements. Wide fields remained uncultivated, and in not a few cases ripened crops were left to perish unharvested. Vast barns and granaries were left entirely empty. On the most extensive plantations but few signs of life were visible. A few aged negroes, too old to run away and too valueless to be removed, were loitering about, bewildered by the sudden and inexplicable change. Now and then a few women were found who had been left behind. They did not exhibit the ferocity which had been generally displayed by female rebels; they were generally anxious for the war to end on any terms, asserting that they were living under a reign of terror, and that they had more to fear from the rebel than from the Union troops.

The retreating rebels had stripped the houses of most of their movable furniture and of all eatables. In the little dilapidated city of Kingston desolation and starvation reigned. The women and children who alone remained all looked care-worn and hungry. Many of the poorer class came rambling through the Union camp, begging bread of the soldiers, and eagerly picking up the fragments which our surfeited troops had thrown away. The women, accustomed only to the brutal aspect and bearing of the Southern soldiers, expressed much surprise at the gentlemanly appearance and demeanor of the Northern troops. But three white men were found left in Kingston, and they were Union men who had hidden themselves from rebel rule. All the rest had been carried off,

either voluntarily or involuntarily, by the rebels.

The battle of Kingston was fought on Sunday. These were strange scenes for our Puritan boys, who had been trained in the Sabbath-schools and churches of the North. The victorious Union troops passed over the bridge into Kingston, and encamped in a large field on the north side of the village, built their fires, boiled their coffee, and sat down to review the labors of the day. The Massachusetts Forty-fifth lost 18 killed, and had 50 wounded. Large numbers had bullet-holes through their hats and part of their clothing. The Tenth Connecticut met with a still more severe loss, as did also the One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania and the Ninety-sixth New York. The rebels lost, in addition to the prisoners we have mentioned, eleven pieces of artillery, a large quantity of small-arms and ammunition, and an immense dépôt of provisions, which they set on fire to prevent it from falling into the Union hands. The battle in the swamp lasted four hours. A young soldier of the Massachusetts Forty-fifth, who had never before been under fire, thus graphically describes his sensations in a letter to his friends:

"When we first filed into the woods I would have given all I was worth to have been once more safely at home. But after the first shot was fired I could not restrain myself. I had no thought of any personal danger. The balls would whistle and hum all over our heads, and every now and then a shell would explode and cover us with mud, and too often with blood. But it seemed to me as though something told me not to fear. I said one little short prayer for myself, thought of each one of you, imagined I heard the sweet church bells of Framingham, and shut my eyes for an instant and saw you all. It could have been but an instant, and then I thought of nothing but pushing the rebels out of the swamp. As we drove the rebels before us I can not describe the exultation we felt that we had helped win a victory for the Stars and the Stripes. But the sad times were at night, when we missed from the camp-fires the faces of those whom we had learned to love, or when we went back to the woods to bury the dead or to save the wounded."

Among the many who fell at the battle of Kingston meriting especial honor we have space to mention but one—Lieutenant William Perkins. His case illustrates that of many others of our noblest young men who left all the endearments of home to peril life in defense of our country. This young man was the second one from his native town, New London, Connecticut, to volunteer. His older brother was the first. With honor he passed through the disaster at Bull Run. At Roanoke Island he was the second man to jump upon the shore. Captain Leggett, of Company H, Tenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers, to which company young Perkins belonged, was the first.

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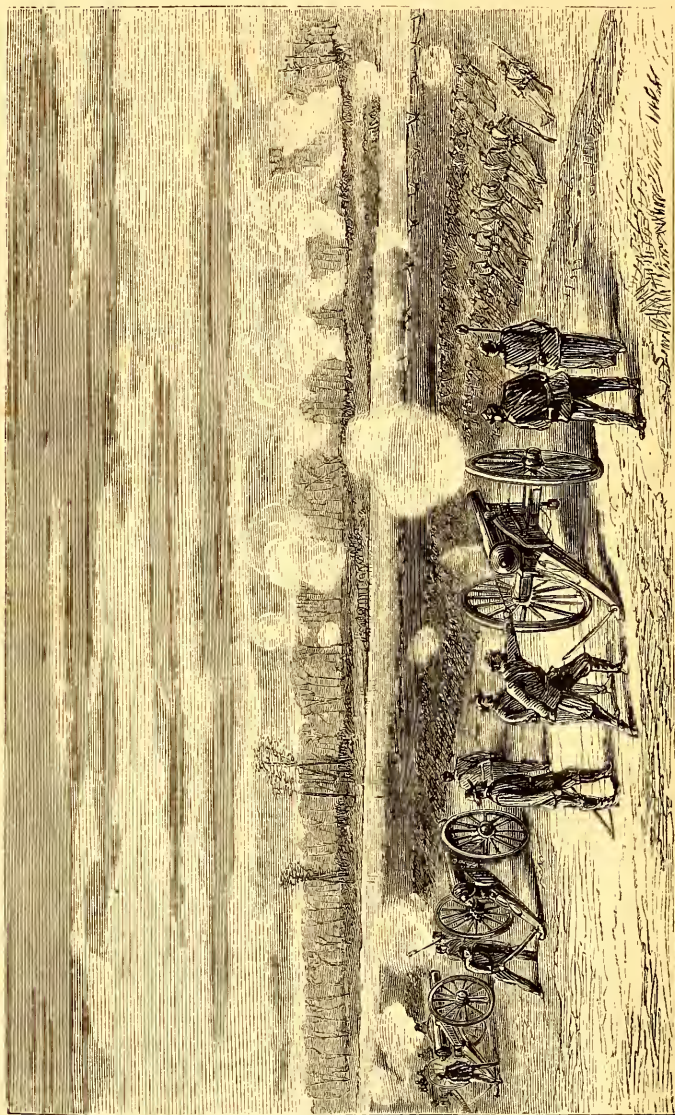
In the heroic and brilliant battle at Roanoke the company lost 23 out of 56 men. Young Perkins, for his chivalric bravery, was soon promoted to the First Lieutenantancy in Company A, Tenth Connecticut Volunteers. At the battle of Kingston all the enthusiasm of his soul was called into requisition. While his regiment was in full pursuit of the rebels, retreating by the bridge across the Neuse, Lieutenant Perkins pressing eagerly on, reckless of all danger, had just exclaimed to a comrade, "Isn't this glorious?" when he was struck by a Minié ball and fell dead. The chaplain of the regiment, the Rev. Mr. Stone, of Boston, in a letter to his bereaved father, wrote:

"Your son was a universal favorite in the regiment. We all loved him for his manly qualities, his generous heart, his kindness of manner, and his winning ways. We were proud of his soldierly bearing and of his courageous deportment."

His letters to his friends showed the conscientiousness with which he had entered upon this strife for civil and religious liberty, and his deep sense of dependence upon God. Such were the victims who, by hundreds and by thousands, were immolated by the demon of slavery upon her blood-stained altars. Earth may be searched in vain for a crime more enormous than that which plunged our once peaceful and happy land into all the horrors of civil war to perpetuate and extend the outrage of human bondage.

Early the next morning—Monday the 15th—the army recommenced its march. Filing rapidly again back across the bridge they pressed along a road which skirted the southern banks of the Neuse, toward Whitehall, which was directly west upon the river, at the distance of about 20 miles. It required nearly five hours—from daylight until 11 o'clock—for the whole army to defile across the narrow bridge. They then, to prevent pursuit and the harassment of their rear, smeared the bridge over with tar and set it on fire. The structure, of wood, 20 rods long and 40 feet above the water, was speedily enveloped in rushing billows of flame, and disappeared in smoke and ashes. Such a long line of troops, with its ponderous artillery and heavily-laden wagons, necessarily moves slow. But by vigorously pushing forward they traveled seventeen miles that day, and again bivouacked by the road-side, about three miles from Whitehall. The weary soldiers did not need beds of down to enable them to sleep soundly that night.

Tuesday, 16th, at 5 o'clock in the morning the troops were again upon the march. They had been in motion scarcely an hour when the roar of battle was again heard at the head of the column. The cavalry and one battery were in the advance. As they were approaching the little village of Whitehall, which is on the south bank of the stream, they found that the enemy had stationed themselves on the opposite side of the river, having destroyed the bridge, and were strongly posted, with ten guns in battery on the opposite bank. The guns were protect-



AN AWKWARD POSITION.

ed by long lines of rifle-pits. A brief but spirited conflict here ensued. As soon as our advance-guard appeared in sight the rebels opened upon them from their batteries on the opposite side of the river. When the Forty-fifth Massachusetts, which in that day's march led the main body of the army, came within reach of the rebel fire, six batteries, containing 36 guns, were immediately brought into position, and opened a deadly fire upon the guns of the rebels, 10 in number, upon the opposite side of the river. These guns, on both sides, were loaded and fired with such rapidity that it is said that there were, in all, more than a hundred discharges each minute. It is seldom, in battle, that so

large a number of guns are so closely concentrated.

The field of action was mostly a level plain, with a few slight undulations. It was necessary to place the Union infantry in positions to protect their batteries from sudden charges by the foe. The Massachusetts Forty-fifth found itself stationed exactly in the range between one of our batteries and the guns of the rebels. The balls and shells from both parties went directly over their heads, so near that were the men to stand erect every head would soon be swept away. As they lay flat upon the ground they could feel the motion of every ball, and the windage would often take away their breath.

Occasionally a shell would explode near them, covering them with dirt. It was a very awkward position to occupy, and General Foster soon changed it. To attain a new position there was a Virginia rail fence to be crossed. As one of the men put his hand on a top rail to spring over a shell struck the rail from beneath him, plunged him headlong but unharmed into a ditch, and knocked down and severely wounded with a splinter another man. Almost at the same moment another shell fell and exploded in their ranks, wounding four men. In the midst of such a fire as this, strange to say, many of the Forty-fifth Massachusetts fell soundly asleep. They were so utterly exhausted by the march of two days, the battle in the swamp, and the sleeplessness of the intervening night in standing guard, that even the deafening roar of battle and the greatest peril of wounds and death could not keep them awake.

The conflict at Whitehall lasted about an hour and a half, one brigade only of the Union troops being called into action. It was found on almost all occasions that our artillery practice was far superior to that of the rebels. Not unfrequently the Union batteries would take position in an open field and silence a rebel battery carefully intrenched, of the same number of guns. While this artillery battle was raging the main body of the army moved rapidly along the road, at a little distance from the river, to gain the stream at a point which the rebel guns did not command. While thus moving a shell fell into the ranks of the Forty-fourth Massachusetts, instantly killing four men. The patriot batteries at length silenced the rebel cannon, and our troops, advancing to the river, destroyed two gun-boats which the rebels were building there. The village of Whitehall, which stood between the hostile batteries, was literally knocked to pieces. The dense woods which fringed the opposite bank of the stream were mown down by our deadly fire as the scythe mows the grass. For a quarter of a mile back from the river, and for half a mile up and down the banks, scarcely a tree was left standing.

One principal object in visiting Whitehall was to destroy the two gun-boats of which we have spoken as being there upon the stocks. As the enemy were in force upon the opposite bank our troops could not in a body cross. It was now night. The boats must be destroyed, and the army must be speedily again on its way to accomplish an enterprise still more important. Two thousand barrels of turpentine were seized, piled in an immense heap on the river's bank, and set on fire. Such a bonfire mortal eyes have seldom seen. Vast sheets of billowy flame flashed their forked tongues to the clouds. The whole region for miles around was lighted up. Every movement of the enemy was revealed, and their positions were mercilessly shelled. Still there were no means of reaching the boats but to call for volunteers to swim the stream and apply the torch. A private named Butler came forward, plunged into the wintry wave,

and pushed boldly for the opposite shore. Every gun was brought into action throwing grape and canister to distract the foe.

Butler ran up the bank to the flaming bridge, seized a brand, and was making for the boats, when several rebels rushed from their sheltered hiding-places and endeavored to seize him. Quick as thought he turned, plunged again into the river, and through a shower of bullets returned safely to his comrades. The batteries were then brought to bear upon the boats, and with solid shot and shell they were nearly demolished, though the flames, could the torch have been applied, would more effectually have done the work.

The shell is a terrible and remorseless engine of destruction. Nothing can be imagined more demoniac than the yell with which they swoop through the air. It is heard the moment the shell leaves the gun, and with the larger size, now often used, is so shrill and piercing that even if a quarter of a mile distant it seems directly upon you. Many of these massive bolts are hurled with such velocity that if they pass within ten feet of one's head they produce a vacuum which takes away the breath; and as it whirs by the scream grows fainter and fainter till it expires in a thundering explosion. The noise which these shells make is indescribable. There is nothing with which to compare it. It can only be imagined by those by whom it has been heard.

Having dispersed the rebels at Whitehall, our victorious little army, under their vigorous leader General Foster, without crossing the river, and with scarcely an hour's delay, pressed forward toward the west, still ascending the banks of the Neuse. Night overtook them twelve miles beyond Whitehall. Here they found their sixth encampment. Scarcely had the dawn of Wednesday morning the 17th appeared ere the troops were again in motion. A party of cavalry had been sent in advance by a cross road on Monday to a place called Mount Olive, twenty miles south of Goldsborough, to destroy as much as possible of the railroad there and a long trestle railroad bridge. This enterprise the intrepid cavalry had successfully accomplished. They now returned to the main body, having ridden seventy miles in twenty-four hours.

The great object of this whole military expedition was to destroy the railroad running south from Goldsborough, which was the principal line of northern communication for the rebels. Like most villages in a slave-holding country Goldsborough is an insignificant hamlet, not important enough even to be noticed in a general gazetteer. It is but little more than a railroad station, where the Wilmington and Weldon road crosses the Atlantic and North Carolina track. There was a costly high-bridge an eighth of a mile long, which here crossed the river, which had been a long time in process of construction. It was an important object of the expedition to destroy this bridge. The rebels, fully appreciating its importance, made a vigorous stand for its defense. But

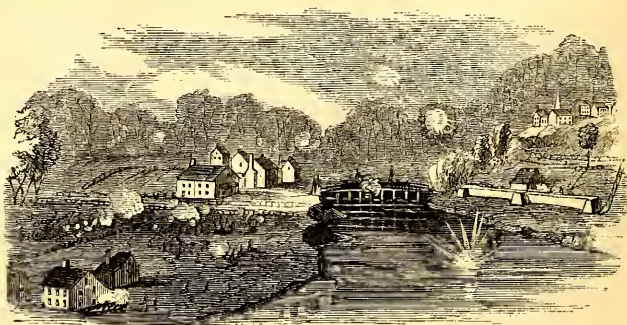
General Foster on this expedition as much out-generaled the rebel officers in strategy and tactics as his soldiers out-fought the rebel rank and file in the open field. At 11 o'clock, Wednesday morning, our soldiers were within five miles of the bridge. The rebels were found there in force, and the battle was renewed. A few miles below the railroad viaduct there was a small stream called Sleepy Creek, where there was a common road bridge across the Neuse. A portion of the army was sent down to this bridge to make a feint, with as much noise as possible, of crossing at that point.

The rebels, deceived by the supposition that it was our main object to seize the railroad junction at Goldsborough, had assembled a large force at this bridge, superior to our own, to guard the passage. General Foster adroitly compelled them to divide their force between this upper and lower point, and kept the river between him and the foe to prevent being overwhelmed by any sudden assault. To prevent the Union troops from crossing the river the rebels made their first stand at Kingston. Here, as we have mentioned, the rebels drove them back and destroyed the bridge. They next made a stand at Whitehall, destroying the bridge themselves. Here the patriots silenced their batteries and destroyed two of their gun-boats. The rebels then drew back their forces to the vicinity of Goldsborough, and established themselves at the two bridges of which we have spoken, five miles apart. While a part of our troops followed down Sleepy Creek to the bridge the main body moved on to the railroad bridge, the object of the expedition.

General Foster had no wish to cross either of these bridges. He was well aware that there was a sufficient force of rebels on the other side, gathered from Wilmington, Weldon, Raleigh, and even Virginia, to overwhelm the force at his disposal. The assault commenced at both bridges at the same time. From 11 o'clock in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon there was the continuous roar of battle. The rebels had taken position on the south side of the railroad bridge. They were, however, soon driven in confusion from their position and across the bridge, and the bridge was utterly destroyed. The flames consumed its frame, and its buttresses were demolished by shot and shell.

The great object of the expedition having been thus effectually accomplished, the army immediately commenced its return. The rebels now began to comprehend the true posture of affairs. They had assembled in such force as vastly to outnumber the patriots. But there was a wide and rapid river, with all the bridges destroyed, flowing between them. In this emergency the rebels went back, ascending the river about five miles, and crossed in the vicinity of Waynesborough. Then marching down the southern bank of the stream, they vigorously set out in pursuit of our leisurely retreating columns. They overtook the patriot rear-guard in the vicinity of Sleepy Creek. As the rebels came on in solid mass the patriot batteries, in good position, remained quiet until they were within three hundred yards, and then, with double-shot guns, they poured in so tremendous a volley that no mortal strength or valor could breast it. Three times the rebel ranks were broken by the awful carnage, and three times they rallied anew to the onset. Finally they broke beyond recovery, and fled in wildest confusion back among the forests and the hills. Some prisoners who were taken said that they lost in this terrific storm of war, which lasted but a few moments, eight hundred men. It was a very bold attempt of infantry to storm batteries up to the muzzles of their guns.

The patriots now retired unmolested, and encamped Wednesday night on the same spot where they had encamped the night before. The next morning, at 4 o'clock, they were again upon the march, and thus they tramped along, singing songs of victory, until 6 o'clock Saturday night, when they encamped about six miles from Newbern. The Sabbath morning sun rose cloudless over the North Carolina pines. The day was mild and beautiful, as though nature had no voice or feature in harmony with the discord of war. The patriot troops resumed their march with waving banners and pealing bugles, and thus rejoicingly re-entered the camp from which they had marched but ten days before. They marched into their encampment to the dear old tune of "Home, Sweet Home." The distance these iron men had traveled, over often the worst of roads, and through a series of battles, was about two hundred miles.



BATTLE OF KINGSTON.

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



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